

Author's Note

My name is Richard Dolph Wakefield. I worked at Angus & Robertson's flagship store in Castlereagh Street, Sydney, from 1960 to 1972.

The memories recorded here are drawn from my own experience during those years. They are not meant as a formal history, but as a personal account of daily life in one of Australia's great bookshops at a time when bookselling was a very different trade.

Some details and spellings may be imperfect, as they rely on memory. However, the events, people, and atmosphere described are true to the time as I experienced it.

This record is offered so that a small part of that world is not lost.

— Richard Dolph Wakefield

Angus & Robertson — Memories from Castlereagh Street (1960–1972)

I worked at Angus & Robertson's flagship store at Castlereagh Street, Sydney, from 1960 until 1972. These were the final years before the move to Pitt Street, and it was a remarkable place to be—a world of books, busy counters, and unforgettable people.

The counters were always crowded with customers, sometimes so busy you could hardly move. Books were not just sold—they were discovered.

In dispatch, the youngest staff member carried the franking machine down to the GPO to have postage credit added using a cheque. We also had “buy-in boys” who would go out to other bookshops or publishers to find books not in stock.

After my army service, I became manager of the Remainders department. We handled publishers' excess stock from a warehouse in Darlinghurst, producing catalogues sent across New South Wales. Staff worked nights picking orders, which were sent out by post or rail. Some of those books would now be considered rare.

There had once been a lending library, with books covered in red to protect them and prevent resale.

The annual book sale was a major event. Counters were crowded with customers, and rare titles could be bought cheaply.

Hedley Jefferies was my mentor, and colleagues included Tim Blyth, Clarrie Eling, and Noel Gervan.

Angus & Robertson was more than a bookstore—it was part of Sydney's cultural life. The move in 1971–72 marked the end of an era, and the old building was later lost to fire.

But the memories remain.